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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 000511

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [LO](#)

SUBJECT: SLOVAKIA TO STAY THE COURSE IN IRAQ

REF: A. STATE 111082

[B](#). BRATISLAVA 352

[C](#). BRATISLAVA 458

[D](#). BRATISLAVA 469

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Scott N. Thayer for reasons 1.4b and d

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Slovak government interlocutors welcomed beginning dialogue on future planning for Iraq deployments, particularly in civilian channels. The GOS is firmly committed to staying the course as long as the Iraqi government requests help, there is an international mandate, and the mandate issued by the Slovak parliament remains valid. Nevertheless, Slovakia recognizes that its mission in Iraq is dependent on other coalition partners, particularly Poland, and is eager to discuss future requirements for Slovak troops in that context. End summary.

MOD Welcomes Civilian Dialogue on Iraq Plans

[1](#)2. (C) Charge, accompanied by DATT and Polec Chief, presented ref A points June 16 to Vladimir Jakabcin, Director General for Defense Policy and International Relations at the Ministry of Defense. Jackabcin was very pleased to begin a dialogue on future plans for Iraq in civilian channels; he had asked several weeks earlier for clarification on "rumblings" in military channels on redeployment plans (ref B). Jakabcin explained that there had been widespread concern among members of the general staff that relocation of bases would make it impossible for the Slovak engineers to continue their specialized work in demining. However, the civilian and military leadership had reached the conclusion that relocation may simply be a natural part of operations in Iraq. Jakabcin's bottom line was that Slovakia will keep its engineers in Iraq "as long as the Iraqis need us, there is an international mandate in place, and the national mandate (issued by parliament) remains valid." Jakabcin stressed the need for a valid UN Security Council resolution (or an international mandate in another form) as a necessary condition for Slovakia to stay the course.

[1](#)3. (C) Jakabcin briefed Charge on a recent visit to Iraq by Lt.Col. Panis, who will soon take over command of the Slovak troops there. Panis expressed no concerns about the performance of Slovak troops and said that there were no plans for redeployments, but if a need arose, the Slovaks would meet it.

[1](#)4. (C) Jakabcin also discussed Slovak plans to contribute staff to MNF-I headquarters as requested by General Myers. Minister Liska approved a plan to ask parliament for an increase in the total number of troops in Iraq. General Bulik had been tasked with identifying vacancies that Slovak officers could fill. Jakabcin said General Myers' July 19 visit would be a good opportunity for the U.S. to offer specific suggestions. Currently there are 105 deminers in Iraq, and five slots in the NATO training mission, of which only 2 are filled. Liska was prepared to request a number beyond this 110-man cap at the July 13 cabinet meeting. If approved by the cabinet, the request would go to parliament for debate in its September session.

[1](#)5. (C) Jakabcin welcomed the upcoming visit by a Washington team to discuss plans for redeployments in Iraq in more detail with military and civilian players (ref A). He suggested that any requests to change the Slovak mission should be coordinated this summer, so that the defense ministry would only need to go to parliament once with an entire package for Iraq.

[1](#)6. (C) Finally, Jakabcin emphasized the need for continuing political dialogue, saying, "The generals aren't in charge of policy; this office and the minister play the decisive role." He explained that after the defense ministry reorganization, he will become the equivalent of the "Political Director" of the MOD.

MFA: We're There to Stay Militarily...

[1](#)7. (C) PolEc Chief presented ref A demarche, in tandem with

the DCM from the UK Embassy, on June 17 at the MFA to Lubomir Cano, Director of the Security Policy Department, and Oldrich Hlavacek, Director of the Fourth Territorial Department.

Cano began by expressing the GOS commitment to Iraq as "We are not withdrawing. No way." He said the GOS recognized it needed to increase public diplomacy to generate more favorable public opinion on Slovakia's role in Iraq, because after parliamentary elections in September 2006 there were no guarantees. He said he hoped Slovakia would not follow the Spain model, but of course anything could happen. Slovakia is closely following Poland's plans, and a Polish withdrawal or downsizing could have a major effect on Slovakia's policy. Cano emphasized that policy in Iraq required flexibility, should be based on conditions on the ground, and that no coalition member could afford to take unilateral action. Hlavacek added pointedly that he still had seen no statement from any coalition capital offering sympathy and solidarity after the June 11 suicide bomb attack on the Slovak embassy in Baghdad (ref C).

18. (C) Cano and Hlavacek welcomed further consultations on redeployments, both from the Washington traveling team, and from the U.S. and UK embassies. Cano pointed out that, as a practical matter, it is less expensive to move troops within Iraq than to bring them home. He also mentioned the planned contribution to MNF-I, but was under the impression that Slovakia would not need to return to Parliament for permission to exceed the 110-man cap, because three slots designated for the NATO training mission were still vacant and could be used for MNF headquarters. Cano and Hlavacek said the GOS was still waiting for an answer from Iraq on its offer to donate excess defense equipment.

...and Diplomatically

19. (C) Charge and UK Ambassador presented ref A demarche on June 20 to Foreign Minister Eduard Kukan, and Charge followed up with MFA PolDir Miroslav Lajcak. Both welcomed increased consultations about future coalition planning in Iraq, and were pleased that a Washington team would be coming with further details.

110. (C) Charge asked about MFA State Secretary Magdalena Vasaryova's statement June 17 that the MFA was considering relocating its Baghdad embassy, possibly outside Iraq (ref D). Kukan said that had been discussed, but was off the table, and the MFA was not considering leaving Baghdad. Nevertheless, there was extensive damage to the Slovak embassy from the bomb, and there were major financial issues. Lajcak later suggested to Charge that Vasaryova had overreacted and that the MFA was committed to staying in Iraq. The question was the best way to do it--whether to rebuild the rented embassy building or find a different location. Another problem was that all the official vehicles were destroyed in the attack. The Czechs were lending the Slovaks cars to move around the city. As a longer-term measure, the Slovaks were negotiating with the Hungarians, who left their armored cars behind in Baghdad when they relocated to Jordan.

Comment:

11. (C) All GOS interlocutors, privately and publically, express their current strong commitment to remaining in Iraq. This position will come under increasing pressure in the campaign leading up to September 2006 parliamentary elections. For example, opposition politician Robert Fico used the assertion that Prime Minister Dzurinda led Slovakia into an "illegal war" in Iraq in an attempt to recall Dzurinda the week of June 27. There is a desire for more engagement, especially on the civilian side, on future planning for Iraq. The GOS looks forward to productive talks during the upcoming visit.

THAYER

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